

## About The NAACP

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### [NAACP Overview](#)



The NAACP, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, is the oldest, largest and strongest civil rights organization in the United States.

The principal objective of the NAACP is to ensure the political, educational, social and economic equality of minority group citizens of the United States. The NAACP is committed to non-violence and relies upon the press, the petition, the ballot and the courts, even in the face of overt and violent racial hostility.

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**FOUNDATION:** The NAACP was formed in 1909 in New York City by a group of black and white citizens committed to social justice. On February 12, over the signatures of 60 persons, the "Call" was issued for a meeting on the concept of creating an organization that would be an aggressive watchdog of Negro liberties. This event marks the founding of the NAACP.

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**FOUNDERS:** Ida Wells-Barnett, W.E.B. DuBois, Henry Moscowitz, Mary White Ovington, Oswald Garrison Villiard, William English Walling and led the "Call" to renew the struggle for civil and political liberty.

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**STRUCTURE:** The NAACP is a network of more than 2,200 branches covering all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Japan and Germany. They are divided into seven regions and are managed and governed by a National Board of Directors. The NAACP is headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland. Total membership exceeds 500,000.

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**LEADERSHIP:** Kweisi Mfume, President and Chief Executive Officer, is the official spokesperson for the NAACP. Chairman of the Board is Julian Bond.

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**PROGRAMS:** The following is a summary listing of NAACP National Office activities. Research, development, and program implementation is coordinated by professional and administrative staff.

- ACT-SO (Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics)
  - Armed Services & Veteran Affairs
    - Economic Development
      - Education
      - Health
      - Labor
  - NAACP Henry Lee Moon Library & Archives
    - Religious Affairs
    - Voter Education
  - Youth & College Division

The following departments handle national operations:

- Branch and Field Services
  - Membership
    - Legal
  - Communications

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**The NAACP Washington Bureau** represents one of the primary forces lobbying for civil rights in the nation's capital. The Bureau's activities are directed primarily at the Congress, the Executive Branch and governmental agencies. They may be contacted at:

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**NAACP, Washington Bureau  
1025 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 1120  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 638-2269**

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**CRISIS MAGAZINE:** The Crisis Magazine is a publication designed to explore the full spectrum of black thought and concerns. The magazine supports the principles of the NAACP Charter and is included with some NAACP memberships.

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## **NAACP OVERVIEW**

On February 12, 1909, on the 100th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birthday, sixty prominent black and white citizens issued "The Call" for a national conference in New York City to renew "the struggle for civil and political liberty." Principal among these was W.E.B. DuBois, who formed the Niagara Movement which drew up an agenda for aggressive action not unlike the group he now joined. Also involved was Ida Wells-Barnett, a young journalist, whose eloquent editorials focused national attention on the epidemic of lynchings. Participants at the conference agreed to work toward the abolition of forced segregation, promotion of equal education and civil rights under the protection of law, and an end to race violence. In 1911, that organization was incorporated as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People - the NAACP.

### **Working through the Courts**

The distinctive strategic emphasis of the NAACP - ending discrimination through legal action - evolved during its first twenty years. By assuming the legal challenges that were required to gain full citizenship for blacks, the Association became a formidable force for change even in its early years. First in *Guinn v. United States*, the Supreme Court in 1910 struck down the grandfather clauses of state constitutions as an unconstitutional barrier to voting rights under the Fifteenth Amendment. In 1917, the Court declared unconstitutional a Louisville ordinance that required blacks to live in certain sections of the city, thus changing residential segregation through city ordinances. Subsequent NAACP lawsuits nullified restrictive covenants - clauses in real estate deeds that pledged white buyers never to sell the property to blacks. And in 1923, the court declared that exclusion of blacks from juries was inconsistent with the right to a fair trial. Thus, in just a few years, formidable obstacles to black voting, integrated communities and integrated juries had been removed through concerted legal action. The Association then widened its scope and faced the next barrier to equal rights.

Case precedents were established "culminating in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared an end to segregated and, in so doing, ended de jure segregation." The process was slow and evolutionary, but as history has demonstrated it was the only way to win full constitution guarantees for the rights of minorities.

### **A Voice for Change**

For 90 years, the NAACP, through political pressure, marches, demonstrations and effective lobbying - has served as the voice, of African Americans. As the nation's largest advocacy organization, our prolonged agitation for peaceful change has been felt in every aspect of American life. Born in response to racial violence, the Association's first major campaign was the effort to get the anti-lynching laws on the books. In 1919, to awaken the national conscience, the Association published an exhaustive review of lynching records entitled, *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918*. NAACP leaders, at potential risk to their own lives, conducted first-hand investigations of racially motivated violence which were widely publicized.

Though bills passed the House of Representatives several times, they were always defeated in the Senate. Nonetheless, NAACP efforts brought an end to the excesses of mob violence through public exposure and the public pressure it mobilized.

In the 1930's, as lynchings declined, the NAACP shifted its focus from racial brutality to the grim economic conditions produced by the Great Depression.

The Association lobbied fiercely against racial discrimination in New Deal programs. Only the imminent threat of a national march on Washington led to FDR's Executive Order to create a Fair Employment Practices Committee and to ban racial discrimination in industries which received federal contracts.

The door to new employment opportunities had opened slightly.

As the nation threw itself into World War II, the NAACP launched a "second war" to end discrimination and segregation in the Armed Services, while expanding employment opportunities on the home front. Though unable to obtain the creation of racially mixed voluntary units, the NAACP affected

